

**Strategies for accommodating occupational stress and
enhancing job satisfaction for part-time workers in Dublin
SMEs**

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland, May 2024

Abstract

The evolving nature of the work environment has presented risks to the welfare of the employees. Occupational stress has long been a formidable issue that detrimentally impacts both people and businesses. According to Fagan *et al.* (2014), part-time employment in many nations is mostly found in lower occupational levels, especially in routine service and intermediate clerical roles. Ireland is among the top six countries worldwide with the greatest percentage of part-time employment, which stands at 23% (Worldatlas, 2024).

According to Esam (2019), while employees in large firms experience stress, these businesses possess the necessary resources and skills to effectively cope with work-related stress in comparison to employees in smaller businesses. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the strategies that are available for part-time workers that reduce occupational stress while enhancing job satisfaction.

A comprehensive interview including 6 participants was conducted. These respondents were only part-time employees who worked in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Dublin. Once the data from the interviews was gathered, it underwent thematic analysis to identify the relevant themes. The analysis revealed that the primary approach that was used to alleviate occupational stress among part-time workers was through comprehensive training. In addition, part-time employees encountered elevated levels of stress due to excessive job requirements. Nevertheless, their ample resources served as a strong incentive for them to diligently execute their jobs.

Declaration

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Acknowledgments

Firstly, I am grateful to the Lord all mighty who is always on my side for giving me strength and wisdom to complete yet another journey.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Mr David Hurley for his dedication and guidance from the beginning of the research process to the very end. Thank you for going above and beyond to provide the necessary assistance.

To all my friends I am grateful for the overwhelming love and support.

A special thanks to my only sibling my amazing brother for your constant encouragement. My mother for your endless love, positive affirmation, and prayers over my life. My father for the confidence that you have in me and always allowing me to chase my dreams and for supporting me.

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Abbreviations List

| | |
|---------|---|
| EU | European Union |
| EU-OSHA | European Agency of Safety and Health at Work |
| HSA | Health and Safety at Work |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| JD-R | Job Demand Resource Model |
| NIOSH | National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health |
| SME | Small-Medium and Enterprise |
| WLB | Work-Life Balance |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS AND TOPIC OF RESEARCH

1.1 Background to the study

The issue of occupational stress has become an increasingly predominant kind of stress in numerous organisations today. According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA, 2014), almost 55.6 million workers in Europe experienced stress at work. Small and medium-sized firms make up 99% of all organizations in the European Union (European Union, 2021), however, in comparison to bigger corporations, SMEs typically have restricted resources. This results in a decreased emphasis on the well-being of workers particularly in terms of the prevention or mitigation of work-related psychosocial stress (EU-OSHA, 2005). The occupational characteristics commonly seen in SMEs, include employees having to take on various positions, working long hours, and bearing a heavy burden of obligations, which can significantly increase the likelihood of burnout among SME employees (Fernet *et al.*, 2016).

Large corporations have extensively embraced techniques to effectively handle workplace stress, however, SMEs still struggle to successfully apply such measures (Wagner *et al.*, 2022). According to Esam (2019), the level of job stress might be significantly higher when employed by a small business. However, it should be noted that employees working for large corporations are not necessarily free from stress, however, larger organisations possess the necessary systems and resources to make more effective attempts at managing employee stress (Esam, 2019). Additionally, SMEs are more willing but less capable of investing in the preservation of employees' health, particularly in addressing stress-related issues (Yeh, Yeh and Chen, 2018)

1.1.2 Working conditions on the correlation between the size of an enterprise

Organisational survival is widely considered to be a fundamental goal of every company regardless of its size. The shift in work dynamics from industrial production to services has resulted in employees being more frequently subjected to psychological demands as opposed to physical ones (Russell *et al.*, 2018). According to Gyamfi *et al.* (2017), contemporary organisations' successful management inspires and motivates workers to accomplish organisational objectives. This can be achieved by several strategies, such as motivation and

promotional activities, which inspire employees to go above and beyond their capabilities (Cole, 2005).

According to Wright and Davis (2003), SMEs employers have a greater degree of control and influence over the working environment. Furthermore, SMEs possess less complex organisational hierarchies, offer greater chances for direct interpersonal communication, operate with more hectic and unpredictable work schedules, and confront higher levels of unpredictability all these factors often lead to a stressful working environment (Yeh *et al.*, 2018). Figure 1 depicts the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in Ireland.

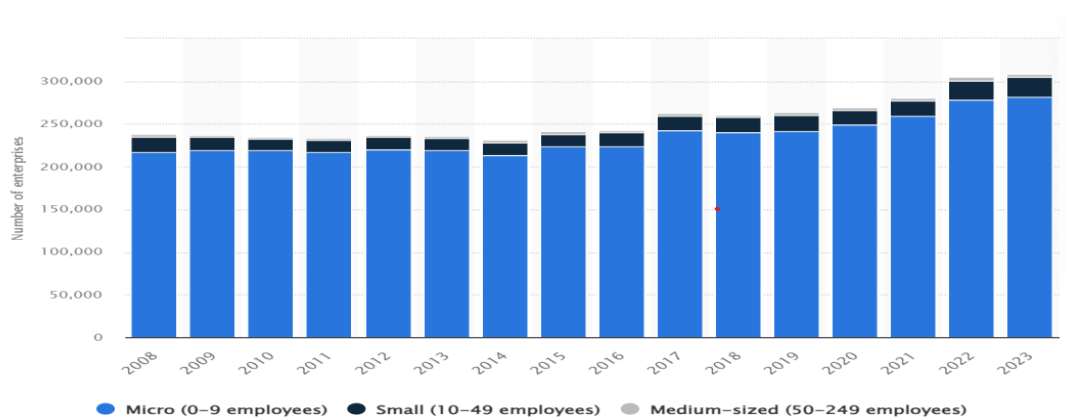


Figure 1: Number of SMEs broken down by size that were in Ireland from 2008-2023 (Statista, 2023).

1.2 Gaps in the literature

1.2.1 Stress mitigating strategies

According to Fagan *et al.* (2014), part-time work is most common in lower-level jobs in many countries, especially in routine service services and intermediate clerical roles. Furthermore, part-time workers frequently face disadvantages as opposed to their full-time colleagues undertaking identical tasks as they often have lower hourly salaries, limited career opportunities, and ineligibility for certain social schemes (Bollé, 2001). As a result, part-time workers are highly vulnerable to experiencing significant stress due to the nature of the jobs that they undertake. Moreover, previous studies have examined work-related stress of full-time positions inside larger organisations that often fall within the semi-formal sector (Siyambalapitiya, and Sachitra, 2019; Restila, 2015; Mosadeghrad, 2013). However, the

current body of literature has not adequately addressed the strategies employed by small businesses to mitigate stress, particularly for part-time workers.

1.2.2 Work-related stress in SMEs

A big part of emerging economies relies on small and medium-sized businesses. Most of the studies undertaken have prioritised investigating stress inside larger organisations, as they are perceived to be larger, and have intricate structures with a greater number of people than SMEs. While employees in large organisations frequently encounter stress, they typically possess the requisite resources and infrastructure to effectively cope with its impacts. Conversely, SMEs lack comparable resources to address stress-related challenges. Numerous research has been conducted to investigate elements that cause stress in the workplace and the detrimental effects it has on both individual well-being and organisational functioning in large companies (Worku, 2021; Mosadeghrad, 2013; Chiu *et al.*, 2005). However, there is a scarcity of literature examining the strategies used by SMEs to alleviate occupational stress.

1.3 Justification for the research

As per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) global statistics, work-related accidents and diseases collectively result in the fatalities of approximately 2.78 million workers annually, with 2.4 million deaths solely attributed to work-related diseases (ILO, 2024). Furthermore, these figures indicate that over 160 million workers experience illness annually because of occupational hazards. Furthermore, apart from the devastating impact on human lives and society, it is projected that the global economy will suffer a loss of over 4% of the Gross Domestic Product because of substandard working conditions, accidents at work, and illnesses (ILO, 2024).

In Ireland, research conducted by Russell *et al.* (2018), revealed that the percentage of workers facing stress in the workplace increased significantly from 8% in the year 2010 to 17% in the year 2015. This increase in stress was found to be associated with factors such as considerable emotional strain, hectic schedules, intimidation, prejudice, as well as extended hours at work (Russell *et al.*, 2018). Also, there's a lot of information that shows how often health-harming practices are among workers who willingly admit to having long-term stress at work. As an example, a study conducted by Kouvonen *et al.* (2008), found that there is a direct relationship between strain experienced at work and smoking frequency. Similarly, Hassard *et al.* (2018), established a connection between higher rates of alcohol consumption and more stress-inducing job responsibilities. There is a growing

acknowledgment that occupational stress has substantial consequences on the well-being of employees, as well as financial burdens for companies and economies. In Ireland, as well as in the wider European Union, Health and Safety legislation mandates that businesses have a legal obligation to implement practical strategies to protect the well-being of their workers when they are at work. SMEs provide less consistent incomes and welfare compared to large enterprises due to variations in organisational structures, manpower, and material resources (Muto, 2000; McMahan *et al.*, 2001). As a result, Micro, small, and medium-sized businesses all have organisational traits that contribute to excessive work stress (Cocker *et al.*, 2012).

1.4 Research aims.

This research aims to fill the noted gaps in the literature by investigating the strategies that are available for part-time workers that reduce occupational stress while enhancing job satisfaction. A lot of studies have looked at the impact of occupational stress in large organisations, as well as the strategies implemented by these organisations to reduce stress. However, there has been a dearth of research on the strategies utilised in SMEs, specifically for part-time workers. Hence, this study seeks to investigate the strategies that are available for part-time workers that reduce occupational stress while enhancing job satisfaction in Dublin SMEs. This research aim is going to be accomplished by addressing the next set of questions.

1.5 Research Questions

Considering the gaps in the existing literature highlighted in section 1.2 of the introduction, the following pertinent questions are presented to investigate the areas that have been insufficiently studied. The study objectives guiding the primary research were derived from the research questions provided below and are presented in Table 2 of the methodology section.

- 1) What are the negative outcomes and effects of occupational stress on employee well-being?
- 2) What is the impact of job demands in contributing to occupational stress?
- 3) How do job resources affect job satisfaction for part-time workers?
- 4) What is the impact of occupational stress on the engagement of part-time employees?
- 5) What are the benefits of strategies to reduce occupational stress and motivate part-time workers?

1.6 Methods and Scope

This study employed an exploratory approach by conducting in-depth interviews with 6 participants to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data. The selection criteria for the participants consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with part-time employees, specifically those working in SMEs in Dublin, who held diverse jobs and responsibilities (see Table 1).

Once the data was gathered, it was subsequently transcribed, recorded, and then subjected to thematic analysis to extract the relevant themes. The findings were compared to the existing literature to identify parallels and discrepancies. The research will focus solely on investigating the tactics employed to reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction for part-time workers in SMEs, without delving into their implementation. Due to scheduling constraints, the sample size used in the study was limited to only 6 respondents. The information of the responders is displayed in Table 1.

| Interviewee | Part-time job description | Enterprise size |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| One -Male | Care worker | Micro |
| Two -Female | Resident Assistant | Small |
| Three -Female | Administrative Assistant | Medium |
| Four – Male | Customer Representative | Micro |
| Five -Male | Bartender | Micro |
| Six-Female | Waitress | Small |

Table 1: Research Sample

1.7 Overview and Structure of the Study

Chapter 1- Introduction

The study commences by providing a concise introduction to the selected research topic, highlighting the gaps in the existing literature review, and justifying the need for the study. The study's main objective and structure are also presented.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

This chapter provides a thorough examination of the scholarly literature relevant to the research question. The section will critically analyse the existing literature on strategies used by SMEs to decrease occupational stress and improve job satisfaction. It will also establish the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

The methodology chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives and outlines the selected methods and procedures employed for gathering primary data for this project. This text delves into the philosophies, techniques, population sample, and systematic assessment of the data collection process with specific reference to the instruments used.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussions

The findings chapter shows the outcomes of the primary study using thematic analysis, identifying overarching themes and significant points that are pertinent to the research objectives mentioned in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

The last chapter of the study provides an evaluation overview of the findings of the primary research and determines whether the research goals and objectives outlined in Chapter 3 have been achieved. Additionally, suggestions for future study and practical application in management are provided.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the current research on the impact of occupational stress and its correlation with job satisfaction. The text delves into various descriptions of occupational stress and explores the different scholarly perspectives on occupational stress. The author further investigates literature that thoroughly examines the opportunities and challenges faced by part-time workers, along with the techniques used by SMEs to provide employee support.

2.1 Occupational stress

Stress in modern businesses is widespread. Occupational stress is generally the predominant stress encountered by individuals who describe their occupations as highly or exceedingly stressful (Chitra, 2020). According to Salem (2015), excessive stress is sometimes inherent and coupled with inevitable aspects of many professional conditions. The management of uncertainty, disagreement, and conflicting expectations is an inherent component of the professional environment for individuals occupying different roles (Salem, 2015).

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999) defined occupational stress as the adverse physiological and psychological responses experienced if the requirements of work don't match the skill set, resources, or preferences of the employee. Occupational stress which can also be referred to as job stress, stress at work, or workplace stress is a form of anxiety and sadness that develops at workplaces and has varying effects on the person who experiences it (Singh, Amiri, and Sabbarwal, 2019). Similarly, according to Chitra (2020), occupational stress is described as a particular negative emotional state that can lead to health issues, job insecurity, a lack of self-determination, and lower levels of job satisfaction. According to Stanton *et al.* (2001), job stress can be characterised by any element of the work setting perceived to be intimidating, demanding, or causes discomfort for an individual. Studies have revealed that perceptions of stress evolve due to several factors, including the age and experience of the workers (von Humboldt *et al.*, 2013; Lattuch and

Young, 2011). Workers may experience adverse effects when resources are constrained, and they may face difficulties in managing the task demands of their work environment.

2.1.1 Contributing variables to stress at work.

Stress at work can be caused by a wide range of variables. According to Yaacob and Long (2015), various elements, including job-related, personality, organizational, and environmental factors, have an impact on employees' stress levels. The job itself, encompassing tasks, obligations, a demanding workload, fluctuations in workload, uncertainty about one's function, and conflicts in roles, can induce stress in employees (Michie and Williams, 2003). A significant contributor to the stress that people experience in their jobs is the leadership of the organisation (Beheshtifar and Nazarian, 2013). Similarly, leadership determines the level of stress experienced by employees (Dehue *et al.*, 2012). There is a correlation between insufficient management and the adverse effects of stress on employees, as determined by Lopez *et al.* (2011) and Restubog, Scott, and Zagenczyk (2011).

Yaacob and Long (2015) further highlighted that stress at work may result from an increase in demands without consideration for the time available to complete the duties. According to Kumar (2023), workplace events, or "job stressors," include a wide range of situations that might be stressful at work. Kumar (2023) states that conflict with co-workers and the nature of the job are the two primary sources of workplace stress. Moreover, employees consume a great deal of their time at work to maintain their competitive edge and often end up neglecting the "stressors" that negatively affect their families, the community, and private lives to fulfill their employment duties (Weale, Wells and Oakman, 2019). Furthermore, the symptoms of stress are classified as physiological, physical, and behavioral and have short-term and long-term effects (Yaacob and Long, 2015).

Critically Singh (2018) argued that stress has both beneficial and harmful effects on individuals and organisations. She further argued that a reasonable degree of stress motivates and supports people to cope with new situations while repeated, extreme, or inability to manage stress can negatively impact performance, causing productive conflicts, competition among coworkers, and failure. Additionally, organizational procedures such as extended hours of work, lack of guidance, instability, low remuneration, and limited opportunities for advancement can also induce anxiety (Mosadeghrad, 2013; Schmitz, Neumann and Oppermann, 2000).

2.1.2 The Influence of Occupational Stress on Productivity

Excessive stress can result in lower productivity and have a detrimental effect on the company. Yaacob and Long (2015) state that a higher level of occupational stress may cause people to be dissatisfied with their jobs, which will ultimately lower production at work. Stress can decrease employee engagement and productivity, resulting in increased absenteeism and turnover rates. Elevated levels of stress caused by work might result in business issues, which include decreased output, heightened absence from work, and low retention (Mostert *et al.*, 2008). These consequences have a negative influence on the profitability of organizations (Schyns and Schilling, 2013; Toor and Ogunlana, 2009).

Work environments characterized by high levels of pressure, along with stress caused by job insecurity, have been linked to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and a lack of commitment to the company (Noblet *et al.*, 2005). The authors Derycke *et al.* (2013), and Magnavita and Garbarino (2013) also discussed social work topics such as bullying and discrimination.

2.1.3 Individual Implications of Workplace Stress

Stress might potentially be an intricate phenomenon in which health outcomes can be contingent upon the unique characteristics of an individual and their coping mechanisms for stressors. Work-related stress is a significant contributor to decreased performance across various occupations (Restila, 2015). Occupational stress can result in heightened burnout and physical, psychological, and emotional fatigue (Rožman, Grinkevich, and Tominc, 2019), as well as increased absence from the workplace and a desire to quit the working (Mosadeghrad, 2013; Machin, Fogarty, and Albion, 2004).

According to the research conducted by Kang *et al.* (2005), excessive work stress raises the chances of getting heart-related disease. Dhabhar *et al.* (2010), research in the field of biology has shown that chronic stress may interfere with how the immune system works, whereas short-term stress can boost the body's immune response. Moreover, anxiety negatively impacts memory, concentration, decision-making, and judgment abilities (Shapiro *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, according to Paton (2012), workers who encountered work-related stress exhibited symptoms such as concern and unease, sleep disturbances, frequent irritability or anger, feelings of despair or powerlessness, reduced self-esteem or sense of direction, decreased motivation, and a heightened inclination towards negative thinking. If the effects of work stress are not monitored and intensified excessively, they can lead to adverse

consequences for individuals, including medical diseases, mental disorders, and reduced social functioning (Zhao *et al.*, 2023).

2.1.4 Job Demand Resource Model (JD-R)

Demerouti *et al.* (2001) first proposed the JD-R model in the year 2001. The theory has become well recognised and respected among academics studying occupational stress, establishing itself as a prominent paradigm for understanding occupational stress (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Demerouti *et al.* (2001) noted that the theory's initial publication aimed at learning about the factors that led to burnout. The JD-R theoretical framework examines aspects that play a role in influencing the well-being of workers and can be used in different types of work environments (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). It implies that regardless of the occupation, work variables that contribute to job stress comprise two distinct groups job demands and job resources that can promote the welfare of employees (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001).

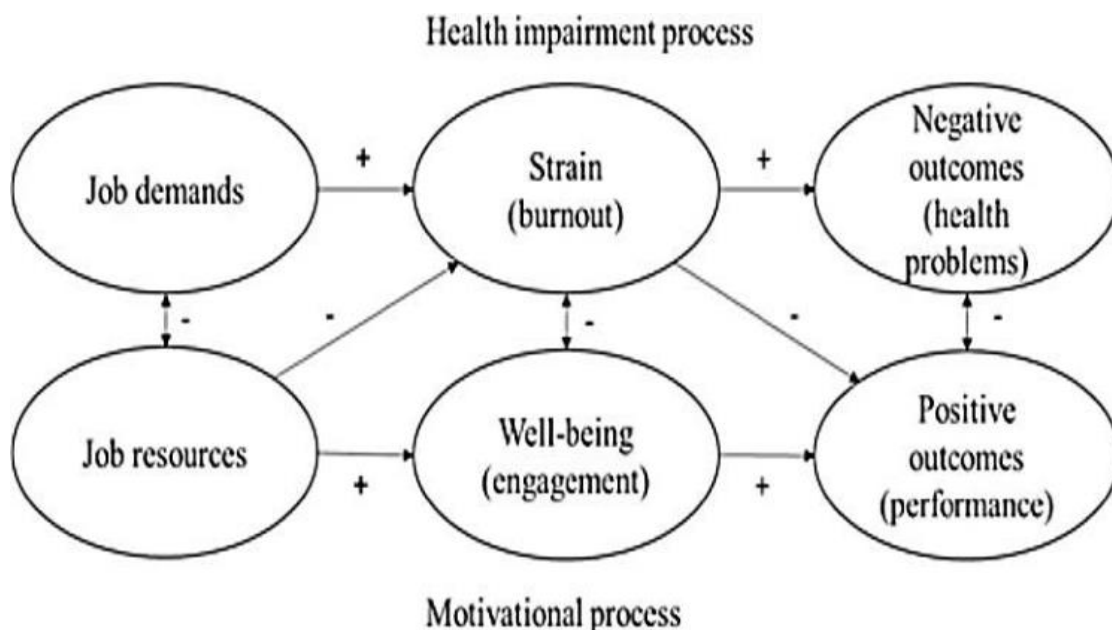


Figure 2: JD-R Model (Schaufeli and Taris 2014)

2.1.4.1 Job Demands

Job demands are components of labour that involve psychological, organisational, sociological, and physical aspects that necessitate physical and psychological exertion as well as any associated physiological and psychological expenses (Lee, Shin, and Baek, 2017). Critically, while the demands of the job might not be inherently bad, they become burdening

whenever achieving those demands necessitates significant effort and is thus linked to substantial expenses that trigger adverse reactions like sadness, tension, or fatigue (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Lequeurre *et al.* (2013), classified the demands of a job characteristics into seven distinctive factors, including workload intensity, cognitive burden, emotional strain, physical exertion, task variability, work ambiguity, and uncertainty regarding the future.

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), work engagement is affected by the demands and resources of the job. Additionally, Schaufeli's research in 2012 suggests that workplace resources play a significant part in encouraging and engaging the workforce, particularly when they are confronted with high job expectations. According to Bakker and Demerouti, (2007), the JD-R model posits that problems concerning the well-being of employees may arise from persistent demanding elements present in the workplace. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), the greater demand in the workplace results in decreased dedication and performance of employees, which can lead to issues like high turnover and absenteeism. Conversely, work settings with fewer demands typically result in higher employee satisfaction and better psychological well-being (Hosie and Sevastos, 2009).

2.1.4.2 Job Resources

According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001), work resources are functional elements of work that contribute to the attainment of workplace objectives. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) state that the resources at work encompass the tangible, mental, communal, or structural elements of a job that serve to (1) alleviate job pressures and the resulting physical and mental toll, (2) contribute to the accomplishment of work objectives, and (3) foster personal advancement, education, and progress. As a result, resources are not simply crucial for managing demands at work and accomplishing tasks, additionally they hold intrinsic importance (Hobfoll, 2002). Furthermore, these resources can lessen the demands at work and promote learning, and self-development.

According to Lequeurre *et al.* (2013), job resources are broken down into seven categories, including information, communication, engagement, associations with coworkers and supervisors, compensation, and independence in the workplace. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argue that job resources have an extrinsic motivating effect because they provide a willingness to put in compensating effort, which lowers job demands and promotes the attainment of objectives. Additionally, they fulfil fundamental human needs for

independence and proficiency, therefore, serving as an inherent source of motivation (Va den Broeck *et al.*, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

2.1.4.3 Burnout

The JD-R framework as seen in Figure 1, suggests that burnout in the workplace is a long-term outcome resulting from prolonged stress at work caused by high demands at the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). According to this definition, job burnout is characterised by constant fatigue and pressure in one's work. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), fatigue, weakness, and energy reduction are symptoms of exhaustion, which are caused by vigorous physical, mental, and emotional strain. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) state that a negative effect associated with work and a desire to disconnect from it are indicators of disengagement from work.

2.1.4.4 Dual Process

The JD-R theory discovered dual processes that result in the emergence of contribute to the development of work-related stress and motivation (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

Deterioration of health occurs when work demands exceed personal and workplace resources, depleting the individual's vitality and resulting in burnout and subsequent health issues (Baka, Prusik, and Jasielska, 2023). An increase in motivation happens when workplace resources are sufficient to boost employees' enthusiasm, resulting in enhanced participation and improved performance at work (Baka *et al.*, 2023). Critically, the researchers argued that both processes develop gradually, with each component influencing the other, while burnout and engagement serve as mediators in their separate processes (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

2.1.4.5 Work engagement

Work engagement can be defined as an active and energetic involvement in tasks that are fulfilling and enhance the perception of competence in the workplace (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001). Maslach and Leiter (2008) engagement at the workplace and extreme fatigue are part of a spectrum with three categories: exhaustion against energy, cynicism versus involvement, and inefficacy versus efficacy. Work engagement can be measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach *et al.*, 2001), where individuals low on exhaustion and cynicism, and high on efficacy, are experiencing engagement at the workplace.

Furthermore, work engagement is distinct from concepts like job satisfaction, which express how well a job satisfies an individual's requirements (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Workers'

emotional investment in their jobs is at the heart of what the researchers call "work engagement."

2.1.4.6 Positive Outcomes

The JDR framework demonstrates that adequate workplace resources lead to increased employee engagement and improved performance, resulting in more efficiency and beneficial outcomes. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), resources at work could enhance work engagement through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, resulting in higher employee efficiency. Several studies have shown a clear correlation between engagement at the workplace and work outcomes. These outcomes encompass extra-role performance, organisational commitment, sales performance, and innovativeness as discussed in several studies (Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke, 2004).

2.2 Job satisfaction

Various researchers have proposed multiple definitions of job satisfaction. Siyambalapitiya and Sachitra (2019) state that the degree to which people have positive mindsets or feelings regarding their work is known as job satisfaction. Similarly, job satisfaction is an attitude one has towards their work, and this attitude comes from how one perceives their employment (Singh *et al.*, 2019). The emotional reaction that a person has towards their job and work environment is called job satisfaction (Kavuran and Camcib, 2023).

After reviewing the above definitions of job satisfaction put out by prior studies, we can assert that job satisfaction is the emotions experienced by employees towards their work. Job satisfaction is a crucial component for organizations. Research by Alkahtani *et al.* (2021), shows that when workers are delighted in their jobs, they are more committed to their company and its success. The utilization of job satisfaction as a motivational tool for employees is crucial for success at work and is correlated with improved productivity and employee motivation (Hasan and Teng, 2017). Job satisfaction varies from one employee to another and is influenced by many different factors.

Previous studies have shown a connection between job satisfaction and outcomes like workload, burnout, and staff turnover (Alam and Asim, 2019; Dall'Ora *et al.*, 2015; Karantzas *et al.*, 2012). Alam and Asim (2019) highlight that high job satisfaction encourages staff retention. Furthermore, overall satisfaction with working conditions, including earnings, the number of hours worked, and organizational support have also been associated with staff

retention (Alam and Asim, 2019; Dall'Ora *et al.*, 2015; Steinmetz, de Vries and Tijdens, 2014).

2.2.1 Factors influencing job satisfaction

Major responsibilities, excessive workloads, and seemingly unattainable deadlines can adversely impact job satisfaction, even among individuals who are highly motivated and committed (Singh *et al.*, 2019). Job satisfaction encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Based on Herzberg's two-factor theory, intrinsic elements are aspects of the work content that make workers happy (Manzoor, Wei, and Asif, 2021). These elements, as identified by Lee *et al.* (2022), encompass achievement, acknowledgment, responsibility, and opportunities for growth and advancement. Critically, Afshari (2020) argues that intrinsic elements are significant in fostering organisational engagement because of the satisfaction they offer to employees. According to Thant and Chang (2021), extrinsic job satisfaction pertains to elements beyond the workplace, such as remuneration provided by an organisation to its staff. These elements contribute to the establishment of beneficial working conditions, which in turn promote employee comfort and eliminate feelings of dissatisfaction (Hur, 2018). Lee *et al.* (2022) state that extrinsic elements encompass several elements such as interpersonal interactions, pay, and workplace safety. According to Nguyen, Nguyen and Le (2021), extrinsic job satisfaction fosters organisational commitment by alleviating work-related stress, resulting in individuals developing a strong affinity for their jobs and consequently demonstrating organisational commitment.

2.2.2 Job satisfaction on performance

Job satisfaction measures how workers perceive their roles within an organization (Wardiansyah, Indrawati, and Kurniawati, 2024). They further asserted that satisfaction at the workplace is determined by individual factors. A worker's performance significantly influences an organization's success by directly contributing to its performance through individual behaviour, alongside other contributing factors (Saleh, Abu Afifa, and Alsufy, 2020).

Jain (2023) asserts that job satisfaction is one of the various aspects impacting workers' overall work-life quality. Job satisfaction greatly influences job performance (Wijaya and Suwandana, 2022). Job satisfaction significantly impacts performance, as mentally healthy content workers tend to work more efficiently (Wright *et al.*, 2002). According to prior

studies (Arya and Supartha, 2022; Alsafadi and Altahat, 2021; Nemteanu and Dabija, 2021), workers' satisfaction at the workplace positively and significantly impacts individual performance. A satisfied worker will exhibit decreased turnover intention (Nemteanu and Dabija, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2019), demonstrating significant dedication not only towards improved assimilation but also to representing the organisation with honour and pride. Job satisfaction is a facet of employee happiness in the workplace. The more the employees are satisfied the become engaged and productive in their roles contributing to greater performance (Wright *et al.*, 2002).

2.2.3 The relationship linking occupational stress and job satisfaction.

Some research indicates that employees with low occupational stress are more satisfied with their jobs compared to those who experience high occupational stress (Johnson *et al.*, 2005). Siyambalapitiya and Sachitra (2019) argue that the quality of service that is provided is significantly influenced by employee job satisfaction and organizational stress.

According to the findings of certain studies, there is a significant inverse link between job satisfaction and occupational stress (Sweeney and Quirin, 2009). Furthermore, research using job satisfaction as an indicator of occupational stress has demonstrated that role overload (Singh *et al.*, 2019), role ambiguity, and work-family conflict (Darmody and Smyth, 2016) have been all demonstrated as measures of job satisfaction.

A notable adverse determinant of job satisfaction and a positive predictor of bad emotions relating to work is role overload as a major cause of stress (Singh *et al.*, 2019). Role overload and job satisfaction are linked in a variety of occupational groups (Chitra, 2020; Siyambalapitiya and Sachitra, 2019; Darmody and Smyth, 2016). Moreover, employees who believed they had to work in a position with demands that exceeded their actual capabilities were likely to feel less content and express more negative feelings toward their jobs (Chitra, 2020). Therefore, negative sentiments and discontentment in the workplace develop when there is a mismatch between people's desires and expectations and the state of their current jobs. Yaacob and Long (2015) highlight that stress can negatively affect workers by lowering their commitment to the organization and causing them to be dissatisfied with their jobs. In a study, Thakre and Barua (2015) found that workers who experienced low occupational stress were more satisfied and involved at work than employees with high occupational stress.

2.3 Opportunities and challenges faced by part-time employees.

The part-time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175) defines a "part-time worker" as an individual with fewer working hours when compared to full-time workers in similar positions (International Labor Organization, 2024). Fagan *et al.* (2014) state that part-time employment in many nations is mostly found in lower occupational levels, especially in routine service and intermediate clerical roles. Disparities exist in the working standards for part-time workers in companies and nations (International Labor Organization, 2024). Part-time employment can improve the working lives of certain people, but some impediments may deter them.

Part-time employment allows workers to incorporate work into their lives, enabling them to manage work with family responsibilities, education, and training. Fagan *et al.* (2014) assert that businesses utilise part-time workers for three primary purposes: attracting and retaining employees; optimising staffing levels to offer operational flexibility; and lowering labour expenses by creating positions with reduced hourly rates. Moreover, employers find part-time work attractive since it can help in recruiting and keeping people who are not willing or able to be employed permanently (Buddelmeyer, Mourre, and Ward-Warmedinger, 2005). These benefits have grown more relevant after the economic slump as decreased hours help firms keep employment numbers while cutting overall labour expenses (Lyonette, Baldauf, and Behle, 2010). Nevertheless, a variety of obstacles may prevent businesses from using part-time labour; the effects of these obstacles may differ based on workforce shortages and industry-specific market conditions. According to Fagan *et al.* (2014), developing a versatile and adaptive workforce that can work flexibly across several activities may be challenging in certain jobs that need consideration of part-time scheduling.

According to O'Dorchai, Plasman and Rycx (2007), part-time work offers advantages like improved work-life quality, decreased contact with dangerous working conditions, and stress at the workplace. Nevertheless, the advantages pose uncertainties in counterbalancing income disparities, inferior employment stability, and career advancement. When part-time work is considered less important than full-time employment, it results in disadvantages such as reduced hourly wages and limited social benefits or chances for career advancement throughout one's working life (Fagan *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, employees who work on a part-time basis frequently face disadvantages as opposed to their full-time colleagues undertaking identical tasks as they often have lower hourly salaries, limited career opportunities, and ineligibility for certain social schemes (Bollé, 2001). Moreover, part-time work is uncommon

or unavailable at high positions in many professional and management fields in most nations (O'Dorchai *et al.*, 2007). Discriminatory treatment and limited job opportunities can decrease the dedication of part-time workers and cause stress (Fagan *et al.*, 2014).

2.3.1 Strategies employed in SMEs to offer employee support.

A significant portion of emerging economies greatly depends on SMEs. However, SMEs especially in developing nations, often offer low-quality employment opportunities, especially for part-time workers (Držajić and Vega, 2017).

When businesses were permitted to operate normally following the Covid-19 outbreak, it was difficult for them to obtain full-time employees because many employers had laid off their employees (O'Toole *et al.*, 2021). Because it had been challenging for businesses to locate full-time employees, most SMEs, particularly those in the service sector, chose to employ more part-time workers. Part-time employees are less likely to receive promotions, earn lower wages, and experience long-term financial implications (O'Sullivan, Cross, and Lavelle, 2021). As a result, they can be prone to high stress and low job satisfaction. High stress at the workplace can lead to toxic working environments which can negatively impact employees mentally, physically, and socially (Rasool *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, Booth and Ours (2009) argue that part-time employees should experience less stress because their workdays are shorter, and they stay engaged in the job market while freeing up time for other activities.

Siyambalapitiya and Sachitra (2019) argue that identifying stress indicators is the initial stage in developing a plan of action to solve issues. Businesses must assist their staff members to help them feel inspired, which will help them be productive and reach the organization's objectives. According to Pandey (2020), the success of a business is largely dependent upon the expertise, communication, and social network of its workers, who are among the largest stakeholders in a business. Therefore, organizations must implement strategies that assist employees. If businesses do not develop strategies for dealing with these damaging and frustrating stressors, staff members will leave in search of better employment alternatives (Wang *et al.*, 2020). According to Kumar (2023), occupational stress has a substantial impact on determining employee retention, it must be prevented by establishing adequate human resources policies. Most businesses only pay attention to full-time employees and overlook part-time workers (Čemerková *et al.*, 2018). However, organizations become more appealing

to employers and lower employee turnover when they have sound methods and policies in place to improve job satisfaction for the workforce (Salehzadeh *et al.*, 2014).

2.4 Organizational support in mitigating occupational stress.

Cultivating a motivated and committed staff is crucial for organisations adaptation in changing workplace dynamics (Rees, Alfes, and Gatenby, 2013). Organisational leaders are currently focused on enhancing work engagement by understanding its antecedents, as highlighted by Rees *et al.* (2013) and Sarti (2014). Organisational management is transitioning from an outward to an internal focus, considering employees as internal customers (Kenny and Cooper, 2003). The researchers further stated that it is through a significant increase in their concern for their employees' well-being that managers are now able to view their workforce as essential resources for the growth and success of their firm.

Perceived organisational support refers to employees' overall belief in how much organisations appreciate their efforts and prioritise their welfare (Wattoo, Zhao, and Xi, 2018). Organisations that offer support to employees can boost their confidence and reduce occupational stress, as found by Malik and Noreen (2015). Evidence has shown a direct connection between increased role stress and perceived organisational support (Kim and Barak, 2015). Consequently, management must try to recognize that disengaged employees become more capable of leaving organisations and exhibit deviant behaviour when they believe that organisational support is deficient.

Gupta, Agarwal, and Khatri (2016) state that employees' affective engagement is influenced by their heightened urge to show gratitude for the support they receive. A strong emotional connection between employees, known as affectional commitment, results in enhanced job performance as workers are willing to exceed expectations. The Barnes and Collier (2013) study emphasises the importance for organisational managers to devise measures to minimise occupational stress and promotes passion and motivation among employees to accomplish established objectives.

2.4.1 Organizational Culture Role on Employee Satisfaction

Organisational culture is a crucial element of organisational behaviour and provides valuable insights into how organisations operate. Organisational culture encompasses the collective attitudes and behaviours exhibited by employees within a specific organisation, influencing

its operational effectiveness and overall welfare. Chang and Lee (2007) assert that organisational culture is comprised of two categories of notions, specifically visible and invisible attributes. According to the researchers, the visible layer refers to the exterior aspects such as buildings, dress, behaviour patterns and rituals. The standards, beliefs, and expectations of the workers comprise the unseen layer 'referred to as the invisible layer (Chang and Lee, 2007).

Research has indicated that organisations that prioritise flexibility and use participative management, with a focus on communication and rewarding employees, are prone to satisfied employees (McKinnon *et al.*, 2003). As a result, workers become dedicated to the overall success of the company as well as their fulfillment. According to Chang and Lee (2007) organisational culture that fosters motivation and support among employees tends to result in high employee satisfaction. This is because employees feel valued and are appropriately recognised for their achievements.

2.4.2 The impact of work-life balance

Work-Life Balance (WLB) pertains to workers' capacity to determine the extent of their involvement, location, and timing in various activities (Rožman *et al.*, 2019). In essence, WLB entails an equitable allocation of time, effort, and commitment across all spheres of life, ensuring contentment in each (Walia, 2014). Employees effectively attaining a work-life balance express greater satisfaction, which has a direct impact on their levels of cooperation, absenteeism, productivity, and employer loyalty (Rožman *et al.*, 2019). WLB has shown good effects on organisations, including decreased absenteeism, enhanced productivity and reputation, increased loyalty, and better employee retention (Chimote and Srivastava, 2013). Overall, when employees have a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives, it leads to a rise in their level of happiness at work, which in turn benefits the firm since they are more engaged in the tasks they are assigned. The inability of workers to maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives, on the other hand, harms their overall performance at work.

2.5 How the literature influenced the methodology

According to Bell and Waters (2014), while reading each item, the researchers must evaluate its contribution to the objectives and take notes accordingly. The JD-R framework, as shown in Figure 1, has aided the author in the process of setting up the 5 objectives outlined in the research methodology, as depicted in Table 1. This was done to provide clarity on the fundamental concepts, variables, and correlations that were pertinent to the research objectives. This clarity ensures that the literature evaluation stays concentrated on answering certain research questions or meeting objectives. The objectives were essential in creating the questions of the research found in Chapter 1. Moreover, the literature review enabled the researchers to uncover any gaps or inconsistencies in the existing literature analysis, which is crucial for this investigation.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Research is a systematic and purposeful process that includes determining an issue, developing assumptions, acquiring evidence, and analysing and interpreting the data (Kothari, 2004). The primary aim of academic research is to explore a specific research question for the enhancement of knowledge in the given subject matter (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

Critically, this study will entail a detailed and relevant description of various methodologies and methods employed for data collection, along with an explanation of their significance in accomplishing the goals and purpose of the study. The research process will be described according to the framework proposed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007) known as the "research onion" (refer to Figure 3). The chapter finishes by discussing the approach used for data analysis and the constraints of the research.

3.1 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

According to Melnikovas (2018), methodology in research refers to a structured strategy used in addressing the research problems and is crucial in ensuring the alignment between selected tools, approaches, and underlying philosophy. This study seeks to investigate the strategies that are available for part-time workers that reduce occupational stress while enhancing job satisfaction. The research objectives necessary to achieve this aim of the study have been established see Table 2.

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Research Objective 1 | To examine the negative effects of occupational stress on employee well-being. |
| Research Objective 2 | To investigate the impact of job demands in contributing to occupational stress for part-time workers. |
| Research Objective 3 | To explore how job resources affect job satisfaction for part-time workers. |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Research Objective 4 | To explore the impact of occupational stress on the engagement of part-time employees. |
| Research Objective 5 | Ascertain the benefits of strategies to reduce occupational stress and motivate part-time workers. |

Table 2: Research Objectives 1

3.2 PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

After identifying the study problem or area of interest the next step is for the researcher to choose the best approaches to take. Critically, this onion exemplifies the diverse array of options, frameworks, tactics, and procedures employed by researchers throughout the course of the investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

Melnikovas (2018) asserts that Saunders' research onion poses a comprehensive description of the stage that needs to be fulfilled to create an effective research process. Saunders *et al.* (2019) state that implementing a useful framework is beneficial when selecting a suitable research philosophy and when formulating strategy stages that need to be fulfilled to create an effective technique. The relationship between Saunders' research onion and methodology is grounded on the structural layout of the research, which is elucidated by systematically peeling away each layer (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The process begins with the outermost layer and progresses towards the core.

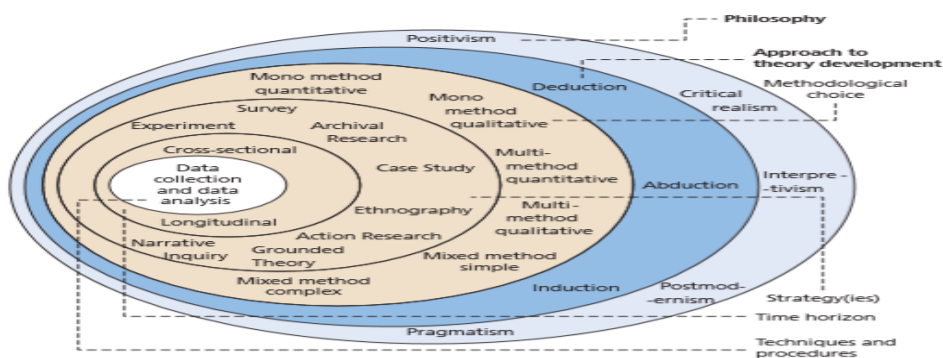


Figure 3: Illustrates the Saunders Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)

3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Saunders *et al.* (2019), propose that research philosophies commonly followed are based on individual perspectives, values, and assumptions for the acquisition of knowledge. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), a research methodology is based on a certain philosophical framework that then dictates the procedures and approaches used in the research.

3.3.1. *Ontology, Axiology and Epistemology Approaches*

Critically, throughout the research process, scholars undoubtedly develop a variety of assumptions, either consciously or unconsciously (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). These assumptions include ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Additionally, these assumptions assist a researcher in formulating the study questions, selecting suitable methodologies, and impacting the analysis of results (Crotty, 1998).

Ontology, as defined by Saunders *et al.* (2019), pertains to the the study's underlying beliefs and assumptions on the fundamental nature of reality. Burrell and Morgan (1979) state that ontological assumptions refer to the underlying beliefs regarding the nature of reality that are relevant to the study. According to Al-Saadi (2014), ontology places significant emphasis on comprehending the nature and structure of reality, either as a preliminary step or in conjunction with the investigation of how knowledge about this reality can be obtained, verified, and comprehended. Nevertheless, this philosophy fails to account for the varied interpretations and how individuals shape their perceptions of reality (Al-Saadi, 2014). Contrary to this philosophy, axiology investigates how researchers manage both their own and the participants' values.

Knowledge and its acquisition are central concerns in epistemology (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Understanding the "why," "how," and "what" was crucial because this study was exploratory and unrestricted. Hence, the epistemology approach was selected, because of the fundamental aspects of knowledge - its essence and structure, the methods of acquiring it, and the means of conveying it to other individuals (Al-Saadi, 2014). Epistemological assumptions are formed by empathetic comprehension of the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals (Brannen, 1992). Therefore, the author of this study has adopted this methodology as it promotes the inclusion of a variety of research viewpoints from the

respondents, techniques, and data, which is beneficial for exploring different interpretations (Bergmann, 2023).

3.3.2 Positivism, Critical Realism, Interpretivist, Postmodernism and Pragmatism

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), the field of business and management encompasses five prominent philosophies: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism which differ in their ontological, axiological, and epistemological approaches.

Critically, Saunders *et al.* (2019) state that the research paradigm adheres to determines the methodological decisions made. The most suitable paradigm for this study was interpretivism, a branch of epistemology. Interpretivism is based on the notion that social reality isn't objective, but rather extremely subjective due to its influence on human perceptions (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Quinlan (2011) states that interpretivism, as an epistemological stance, originated from criticisms of positivism and its constraints in the context of social scientific research. According to Myers (2008), taking on the interpretivism paradigm allows for the gathering and examination of qualitative data to yield significant insights and findings that may be different from other researchers.

Positivism methods were among the alternate strategies rejected because the method highlights objective knowledge, particularly focusing on the analysis of raw data that have not been influenced by human analyses (Scotland, 2012). The critical realism approach was rejected as interpretivist critics argue that it fails to adequately recognise the influence of social activities and discourses on people's perception and conception of reality (Sayer, 1992). The postmodernism approach was rejected as critics contend postmodernism's tendency to deconstruct narratives and draw an emphasis on multiple meanings without synthesis or comprehension may lead to research that is hard to apply or transfer into practical knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). According to pragmatists, ideas only have value when they can be put into practice (Kelemen and Remens, 2008). According to Maarouf (2019), pragmatism advocates for utilising any research method that effectively answers research questions. This approach was rejected as many academics criticised pragmatism both as a general philosophy and as a philosophical explanation for the mixed research strategy (Maarouf, 2019).

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

An important factor to consider when planning your study is whether you are primarily interested in testing existing theories or developing new ones (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Researchers often use either deductive or inductive reasoning when carrying out their work (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

| <i>Deduction emphasises</i> | <i>Induction emphasises</i> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ scientific principles■ moving from theory to data■ the need to explain causal relationships between variables■ the collection of quantitative data■ the application of controls to ensure validity of data■ the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition■ a highly structured approach■ researcher independence of what is being researched■ the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events■ a close understanding of the research context■ the collection of qualitative data■ a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses■ a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process■ less concern with the need to generalise |

Figure 4: shows key distinctions between inductive and deductive approaches (Saunders *et al.*, 2007)

3.4.1 Inductive versus deductive

The deductive approach begins by formulating a hypothesis based on existing theory and subsequently aims to verify this hypothesis by observational evidence (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Robson (2011), deductive thinking involves progressing from the broader concepts to the more detailed ones. It is frequently employed in quantitative research, where ideas are transformed into quantifiable variables that are subsequently examined to validate or disprove the initial theory (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The deductive approach is a systematic method that seeks to confirm or question theoretical assertions by following a logical sequence of procedures to guarantee that the study findings can be attributed to the hypothesised effects (Robson, 2011). The deductive theory was criticised as the reasoning technique that allowed for a causal link to be established between certain factors without considering how humans view their social environments (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

According to Bryman (2008), the inductive research approach commences by observing specific phenomena and aims to formulate general ideas or hypotheses derived from these observations. It is frequently linked with qualitative research, which aims to investigate patterns, themes, or theories that arise directly from the data (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Inductive reasoning begins with specific observations and then draws broader conclusions which is especially valuable for developing new ideas or building upon existing knowledge with limited information (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, Saunders *et al.* (2019), propose that an Abduction strategy, which combines inductive and deductive theories, can be examined by researchers to facilitate the integration of different logics. However, this method did not apply to the present study as it was considered inappropriate. The inductive approach has been utilised in this study due to its exploratory and focus on utilising qualitative data to establish and gather this information through employing diverse methodologies to discern various perspectives (Bryman, 2008). This approach will examine the strategies in Dublin SMEs that reduce occupational stress and enhance job satisfaction for part-time workers.

3.4.2 Exploratory versus Descriptive

Saunders *et al.* (2012), research designs can be categorised into two types: exploratory and descriptive approaches.

- *Exploratory approach*- Focuses on discovering new perspectives through asking open questions to acquire greater insights into a particular issue or scenario (Myers, 2008).
- *Descriptive approach* - It aims to generate an accurate representation of people, as well as measure various occurrences or situations (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

The descriptive approach was rejected due to its lack of exploration into the underlying reasons or causes of the observed events and it typically entails gathering quantitative data through surveys, questionnaires, and observations (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This study adopted an exploratory approach due to its flexible nature this method can lead to the formation of new, well-founded theories as well as the revelation of unexpected insights (Saunders *et al.*,

2016). Hence, this study explores the strategies used to reduce occupational stress and improve job satisfaction among part-time workers by asking unrestricted questions during in-depth interviews, as a result, the exploratory method was appropriate.

3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

According to Quinlan (2011), research projects can collect two sorts of data: quantitative data and qualitative data. Bazeley (2004) states that the concepts of "qualitative" and "quantitative" have traditionally been linked to distinct paradigmatic research techniques particularly ontology and epistemology, which are based on differing assumptions.

3.5.1 Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative

Quantitative research investigates the connections of variables, evaluated by measurements of numbers, and analysed by statistical and graphical methods (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). However, quantitative methods have limits in fully capturing the depth and complexity of human experiences or behaviours as effectively as qualitative methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). In contrast, qualitative research pertains to the interpretation and exploration of meaning by processes that may not be measurable or quantifiable. This approach enables the discovery of excellent responses along the course of the research (Creswell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008).

However, Queirós, Faria, and Almeida (2017) contend that qualitative research is a broad field with numerous variations that can make it difficult to develop a coherent methodology. Nevertheless, the author has opted for the qualitative methodology as it is suitably applicable to the proposed study objectives see Table 2. Furthermore, this research is an exploratory study that investigates the factors that contribute to occupational stress, the impacts of occupational stress, and the strategies used to reduce occupational stress and improve job satisfaction for part-time workers. According to Creswell (2015), if the qualitative approach is carried out the researcher must gather the respondents' words and analysing them by identifying common patterns and concentrating on the participants' meaning, and utilising both expressive and persuasive language to describe the findings.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data in research means quantitative or qualitative information that is collected by observation, measurement, or responses and utilised for analysis and computations to obtain a result that addresses the study question or hypothesis testing (Babbie, 2007). Taherdoost (2021) defines data collection as methodically gathering and measuring factors relevant to the study to answer the objectives of the research, test hypotheses, and evaluate findings.

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), reliability pertains to being capable of reproducing results and maintaining consistency. For research to be considered reliable, it is crucial to gather the correct data methods and analytic methods that yield consistent results (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), validity is all about how well the results were analysed, how appropriate the measurement was, and how generalizable the results are. The main goal of the data collection approach for this study was to derive the views and feelings of participants precisely and reliably regarding their experiences concerning occupational stress and job satisfaction, as well as the strategies offered to them as part-time workers.

3.6.1 Qualitative Primary Data Collection

Data gathering methods fall into two categories: Primary and secondary data collection methods. According to Taherdoost (2021), information that has been obtained directly, is not altered, and has not yet been made available to the public is known as primary data.

In qualitative research, an in-depth interview is a method that includes carrying out detailed, intensive, and personal discussions with fewer participants to uncover individual perceptions on various issues, such as ideas, programs, or states of affairs (Boyce and Neale, 2006). As a result, this study involved conducting in-depth interviews remotely, with participants being encouraged to share their perspectives on the study topic.

The conversations were audio recorded to facilitate the gathering of precise data evaluation. The gathered data will carefully be evaluated and reviewed in the next chapter, covering all pertinent themes. Respondents were asked probing questions to obtain more comprehensive

and detailed data (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Critically, probing prompted the exploration of aspects that the researcher had not previously considered, however, were crucial for their comprehension and aided in addressing the study topic. A list of questions to guide the respondents was used throughout the interview. However, the format was flexible, allowing for open-ended questions that would prompt respondents to provide elaborate answers.

3.6.2 Population sample

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), sampling entails choosing a sufficiently broad and representative subset of a whole population that accurately reflects the overall traits or features of the full population. Several academics, such as Barnett (2002), contend that in comparison to a census, picking a sample allows for a higher degree of total precision. The various methods of sampling can be categorised into two distinct categories: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Patton (2002), defining the study population is crucial because it guarantees that the participants chosen are appropriate to the research question and objective.

This research used a non-probability sampling technique because the researcher chose samples depending on their subjective judgment, as opposed to selecting them at random (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised or used to draw statistical inferences for the population (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). To effectively address the research objectives and pick relevant instances related to the topic being studied, a purposive method of sampling was deemed suitable for this research. Purposive sampling involves exercising judgment to choose cases that will effectively address research questions and fulfill objectives (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Researchers have the option to use several purposeful sampling designs, that include extreme or deviant, heterogeneous, or homogeneous sampling when selecting respondents for their study. Heterogeneous sampling employs researchers' judgement in selecting specific respondents with adequate various attributes to ensure the highest potential range of variances in the acquired data (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, this enables researchers to gather data and analyse significant themes that can be detected, as well as provide descriptions and explanations for them. The deliberate use of a heterogeneous sampling approach was effective in studying a

diverse group of part-time workers in various roles across different SMEs in Dublin. Table 1 displays detailed information on each participant.

Six in-depth interviews conducted were essential aspects of the research in establishing a diverse range of perspectives and experiences from a group of participants who provided valuable insights on the topic of the study. The interviewees were individuals who worked part-time and were recognised to have encountered occupational stress in their workplace. The interviews were performed using teams, with participants providing approval for recorded interviews but declining consent for the filming of the interviews. As mentioned in the limitations, the size of the sample poses difficulties. Out of the 6 participants, half were female, and half were male. The researcher had conversations with participants which were facilitated using team meetings and assumed accountability for all audio recordings, transcripts, and data gathering. Also, the author conducted a comprehensive analysis of the transcripts to detect recurring patterns and determine whether they aligned with the existing research discussed in the second chapter.

3.7 ANALYSING THE QUALITATIVE DATA

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Finding commonalities in a dataset be it an assortment of interviews, documents, or examined websites is the main goal of the thematic approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Thematic analysis involves categorising the findings into themes or patterns that can be further analysed to answer the research questions. Furthermore, this analytic approach offers a structured and easy-to-use strategy for data examination (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, according to the researchers, the process is systematic as it provides a methodical approach to qualitative data analysis.

This study will utilise a thematic analysis approach inside an interpretivism framework to explore various interpretations. There are two primary justifications for using thematic analysis its accessibility and flexibility allow researchers to engage in a study approach that may otherwise appear unclear, mysterious, intellectually demanding, and excessively

intricate. According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), transcribing is crucial for familiarising oneself with all aspects of the data to effectively engage in the analytic process. The author obtained the participants' consent to audio-record each interview and subsequently transcribed the recordings to analyse the data. Secondly, the author manually coded the data by writing short phrases on the texts being examined, employing highlighters and coloured pencils to denote probable patterns. Coding is employed to classify data that share comparable meanings (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), searching data for themes, patterns, and linkages, and identifying these relationships is considered a separate phase of analysis that comes after coding. The author categorised the various codes into themes using tables to facilitate the identification of both significant important and less significant themes. To conduct a thorough analysis, it is important for the themes you develop to be integrated into a cohesive collection as this will give you a well-organized and structured framework for the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). As the author developed the themes, they restructured the coded extract into appropriate sub-themes, and it became clear that some of the first identified themes were not themes, while others merged.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Acknowledging ethical implications when collecting data is a crucial process. Arifin (2018) states that ethical considerations hold significant importance in qualitative studies because of the comprehensive essence of the research process. Moreover, research frequently necessitates extensive collaboration and coordination, therefore, collaboration relies on core principles like reliability, equity, consideration, and responsibility, all of which are upheld by standards of ethics. (Gajjar, 2013). To ensure the ethical handling of the respondents who took part in the study, the author has filled out and sent an Ethical Review Application Form which was submitted to the National College of Ireland. The document outlined the measures that would be taken throughout the research to guarantee that respondents are treated ethically.

3.9 LIMITATIONS

According to Akakandelwa and Jain (2013), limitations are underlying disadvantages of the research that are beyond the reach of the researcher. The main limitation of the study was that

it employed a small sample size consisting of six respondents, hence hindering the capacity to apply the findings to a larger population. The main problem with this study was that it employed a small sample size of six people, which made it hard to apply the results to a bigger group of people. Furthermore, while the interview questions were meticulously prepared and executed, establishing connections between topics was challenging due to variations in individual viewpoints and anomalies in the process of gathering data, which might be affected by the diverse experiences and exposure of respondents to work-related stress in their respective jobs. Given more time, the author would have performed more interviews to expand the number of participants to a more diverse audience and carry out a deeper analysis.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Part-time work in many countries is largely in lower occupational levels, especially in demanding routine service and intermediate clerical tasks which are highly stressful (Fagan *et al.*, 2014). Most of the literature focuses on the stressors that influence occupational stress for full-time employees. However, literature is scarce regarding the available strategies, particularly for part-time workers that reduce occupational stress while enhancing job satisfaction in Dublin SMEs.

The following section covers the findings from the six in-depth interviews which will be discussed to establish a clear relationship with the current body of research. The findings were acquired, and a method known as thematic analysis, as described in Chapter 3, was employed to comprehensively examine the data.

4.1 Qualitative Findings

The researcher employed qualitative analytic methodologies to examine the responses that were provided by respondents. The thematic analysis method which was extensively outlined in the previous chapter was used to analyse the data, leading to the discovery of several themes that are pertinent to the study's objectives, as depicted in Table 3. The collected data was recorded, classified, and analysed to derive the thoughts and emotions of participants precisely and reliably regarding their experiences concerning occupational stress and job satisfaction, as well as the strategies offered to them as part-time workers. The findings are structured around these themes, which were thoroughly examined in detail. Both major and minor subjects are explored, and applicable statements from the interviews with respondents are referenced.

| <i>Research Objectives</i> | <i>Major themes</i> | <i>Minor themes</i> |
|--|--|---|
| Objective 1: To examine the effects of occupational stress on employee well-being. | Lack of concentration and focus. | Anxiety |
| | Headaches, migraines, and stomach pains | Fatigue |
| | Irritability and sadness | Emotionally draining |
| Objective 2: To investigate the impact of job demands in contributing to occupational stress. | Multitasking and rapid schedule change | Long hours |
| | Dissatisfaction | Motivator |
| | Burnout | |
| Objective 3: To explore how job resources affect job satisfaction. | Sufficient resources | Occasional shortage of |
| | Encourages performance. | resources Does not affect satisfaction. |
| | Productivity and efficiency | Motivator |
| Objective 4: To explore the impact of occupational stress on the engagement of part-time employees. | Clarity of tasks | Regular breaks |
| | Lack of support from management | Unpredictable |
| | A supportive organisational culture increases engagement | An organization that encourages creativity increases engagement |
| Objective 5: Ascertain the benefits of strategies to reduce occupational stress for part-time workers. | Full-time workers more valuable than part-time workers | |
| | Training and online courses. | |
| | Little no growth opportunities | |

Table 3: Major and minor themes

4.1.1. Objective 1: To examine the negative effects of occupational stress on employee well-being.

The author presents and analyses the data gathered in this section, emphasising the adverse effects of work stress on the overall well-being of part-time workers. The author classifies the harmful impacts of work stress on employees' mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being. According to Timotius and Octavius (2022), psychological and social triggers are the primary factors that contribute to a variety of stress-related health issues in employees and establish a comparison between the perspectives of those who participated in the interviews. Based on the replies provided by the participants, it can be concluded that many of them experienced mental and emotional health issues due to psychosocial stresses, resulting in a high degree of stress at the workplace.

4.1.1.1 THE LINK BETWEEN WORK STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

During the in-depth interviews, a prevalent theme that emerged was the participants' difficulty in sustaining concentration and focus on their work when experiencing stress. Consequently, they were unable to completely execute their tasks efficiently. A participant provided feedback regarding the impact of stress on their mental well-being:

“I am unable to think straight, and I am unable to perform as I ought to. Sometimes I skip procedures at work.” (Interviewee 1). Shapiro *et al.* (2005) provided evidence for this claim by highlighting that stress has a detrimental effect on memory and concentration resulting in impaired decision-making and judgment capabilities.

Similarly, another participant shared their accounts of work-related stress on mental well-being:

“Work stress makes it hard for me to sleep. I feel sleep deprived which impacts my concentration and creates a negative cycle during the day. I am a recruitment administrator though it's a part-time job it requires focus and concentration” (Interviewee 3).

Most of the interviewee's perspective aligned with the findings of secondary research, which indicate that occupational stress has a detrimental effect on mental health which can result in

varied outcomes (Shapiro *et al.*, 2005). A minority of participants observed that stress triggers anxiety, which is consistent with the notion of occupational stress in the literature review.

4.1.1.2 PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL PARAMETERS

The research findings indicated a consistent pattern of work stress having physical effects on the participants. More precisely, the participants commonly experienced fatigue during their activities, leading to the emergence of diverse physical conditions like stomach pains, and migraines triggered by excessive strain. Headaches were the most physically experienced effect of occupational stress by a total of four respondents. Moreover, most participants indicated that stress increases their susceptibility to experiencing heightened irritability and sadness, which can place strain on their relationships.

“Work stress makes me more tired which sometimes gives me a headache and stomach pains. Emotionally it makes me lose my patience when working with others” (Interviewee 5). Work-related stress can result in bodily manifestations, with frequent symptoms reported by workers including headaches and stomach pains (Timotius and Octavius, 2022). Furthermore, the researchers state the emotional indicators associated with stress include symptoms such as irritability, and fluctuations in mood, which have a detrimental impact on work performance and interpersonal relationships.

Likewise, another participant reported that they suffer from migraines because of experiencing excessive occupational stress:

“I have migraines and when I have them, I need to be in a pitch-dark place with no noise and stay there for a day to recover. Emotionally it makes me want to cry out.” (Interviewee 6).

These findings align with the secondary research, indicating that inadequate management of work-related stress can have detrimental emotional and physical effects on employees, potentially resulting in a range of detrimental health issues and strained relationships.

4.1.1.3 EFFECTS IN PERSONAL LIFE

Most respondents acknowledged that work-related stress harmed their relationships. Given that all participants were part-time students, they disclosed that the challenge of juggling their academic responsibilities with work commitments severely limited their availability to spend quality time with their loved ones.

“I am not able to pray more and read the bible more. I am not able to interact more with people. I prefer to have some silent time to try and catch my breath rather than to interacting.” (Interviewee 4). According to Timotius and Octavius (2022), the initial phase of stress typically activates a detrimental component that adversely impacts behaviour, leading to symptoms such as isolation from others, exhaustion, and reduced physical activity.

Similarly, another respondent emphasised the need to take rest on their days off, which therefore limits their availability to socialise with friends:

“Relating with friends is difficult because my off days are the only days I get to rest.” (Interviewee 1).

These findings are consistent with the secondary research that emphasises the burden and adverse consequences of work stress on relationships. Overall, part-time workers experience significant exhaustion from their jobs, which hinders their ability to adequately cultivate their relationships with friends and family.

4.1.1.4 PERSONAL ADAPTABILITY

All the participants indicated that they mainly deal with work stress after work by engaging in non-work activities that promote relaxation. Furthermore, the responses revealed that the participants lack specialized coping mechanisms for managing stress while at work. Instead, they tend to suffer the tension during working hours and seek ways to alleviate it once they have finished their task. O'Connell, McNeely, and Hall (2008) assert that adaptability to stress is contingent upon various aspects such as job demands, environmental conditions, and experience.

“After work, I take some time off to reset and recoup. Just take my mind off work activities and do other things like watching my favourite TV show.” (Interviewee 2). Many individuals can effectively manage work-related stress by participating in activities outside of the job that helps alleviate their tension (O'Connell *et al.*, 2018). The findings corroborated the researchers' hypothesis that most individuals possess the ability to effectively manage work-related stress by engaging in alternative activities.

4.1.2 Objective 2: To investigate the impact of job demands in contributing to occupational stress.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) state that job demands may turn into burdens whenever achieving them requires significant effort and leads to emotional reactions that include dissatisfaction stress, or exhaustion. Based on the interviewee's responses, excessive job demands are draining. Consequently, this heightens stress levels and decreases satisfaction, resulting in reduced enthusiasm among part-time workers when carrying out tasks.

4.1.2.1 THE EFFECTS OF JOB DEMANDS ON STRESS

Most participants reported experiencing stress due to the recurring job demands of multitasking and shift work. Many of the participants reported that their work schedules were frequently altered, resulting in difficulty in managing their academic and job responsibilities. This constant disruption of their plans caused them to experience stress. Lequeurre *et al.* (2013), classified job demand characteristics into seven distinctive factors, including workload intensity, cognitive burden, emotional strain, physical exertion, task variability, work ambiguity, and uncertainty regarding the future. *“I do everything which causes me stress.”* (Interviewee 5) The response demonstrates conformity with Lequeurre *et al.* (2013) by including one of the characteristics of job demands, which is multitasking.

“I work a 12-hour long night shift which affects my sleeping patterns and stresses me a lot.” (Interviewee 2) Critically, job demands have diverse impacts that result in comparable psychosocial consequences, affecting the worker's well-being and diminishing their work effectiveness (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The results indicated that most of the employees had high job demands, leading to increased stress while performing their responsibilities.

4.1.2.2 THE LINK BETWEEN JOB DEMANDS AND JOB SATISFACTION

Most participants reported that their job demands had a substantial effect on their job satisfaction, since these demands emotionally weigh them down and lead to emotions of dissatisfaction, ultimately adversely impacting their whole working experience.

“The demands at work lower my job progress which leads to low satisfaction of whatever I have done for the client. When reflecting I find myself wishing I would have done things differently”. (Interviewee 1). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that employees experience dissatisfaction when they become exhausted due to intense job demands. While all jobs come with certain responsibilities, high levels of demands can have a detrimental effect on employee well-being and performance which could lead to dissatisfaction.

The results could be linked to the research conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), which emphasised that excessive job demands can lead to employee exhaustion and dissatisfaction.

4.1.2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF JOB DEMANDS ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING.

The employee's mental health and emotional well-being are significantly affected by excessive job demands, leading to a decline in their interest and passion for their work. This leads to burnout and emotional exhaustion. The participants were given a chance to discuss in detail the effect of job demands on their overall well-being. A significant number of individuals reported suffering burnout, leading to subsequent negative outcomes.

“I feel burnout and drained. Sleep deprivation is one the biggest things for me that impacts my mood.” (Interviewee 2). The results are consistent with the JD-R model, as seen in Figure 1, which suggests that burnout in the workplace is a long-term outcome resulting from prolonged stress at work caused by high job demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

Similarly, one participant emphasised that they had experienced a decline in his sense of purpose and enthusiasm because of overwhelming stress due to the job demands, leading to unpleasant emotions. *“I am not the same person I was when I started, I am like a shadow. I am highly stressed, and I don't have a life.”* (Interviewee 3)

Both the perspectives of the participants and the secondary study indicate that excessive job expectations might have detrimental and diverse impacts on employees' health and overall well-being if not promptly addressed.

4.1.3 Objective 3: To explore how job resources affect job satisfaction.

The availability of job resources positively affects job satisfaction, which is a motivator for employees to accomplish their responsibilities more efficiently, hence boosting their overall performance. An increase in motivation happens when workplace resources are sufficient to boost employees' enthusiasm, resulting in enhanced participation and improved performance at work (Baka *et al.*, 2023).

4.1.3.1 THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ALL THE NECESSARY JOB RESOURCES

A significant number of participants indicated that they have abundant and suitable resources to carry out their everyday tasks. Although there may be sporadic scarcities, these resources are often readily available.

“I have all available resources at my workplace it easily motivates me to do work and be effective.” The obtained results align with the findings of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), which suggest that when job resources are readily available, it reduces job pressures and the subsequent physical and mental strain. Figure 2 demonstrates that job expectations serve as motivators by effectively engaging individuals and resulting in improved performance and favourable outcomes.

4.1.3.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB RESOURCES AND JOB SATISFACTION.

Most participants expressed that having adequate resources has which positively affects their satisfaction at work. They feel more encouraged to perform their responsibilities efficiently and experience a reduction in pressure.

“I feel empowered and valued when I have all the resources available at my work which makes me feel more satisfied.” (Interviewee 3). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), resources at the workplace have the potential to enhance involvement in the workplace by stimulating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, resulting in improved production. This is

consistent with the results. According to the findings and secondary research, greater resources increase job satisfaction, which leads to more efficient work and less stress. Lack of resources for employees' responsibilities might diminish job satisfaction and lead to stress.

4.1.4 Objective 4: To explore the impact of occupational stress on the engagement of part-time employees.

The participants highlighted that their level of engagement increases when they possess a comprehensive understanding of the assigned tasks, as this reduces their stress levels. The primary element that increased stress for the part-time workers was the absence of support from leaders. The organisational culture had a substantial impact on maintaining the workers' engagement.

4.1.4.1 THE FACTORS OF ENGAGEMENT.

Lequeurre *et al.* (2013), classified work ambiguity as one of the seven characteristics of job demands. When employees have a comprehensive comprehension of tasks might result in less stress and heightened levels of involvement. The prevalent theme among many participants was having a clear understanding of their jobs, responsibilities, and targets, which effectively maintained their engagement at the workplace.

“When I feel like my tasks are clear and I have a clear understanding of how my role contributes to the overall recruitment process within the task I feel more engaged.”

(Interviewee 3). (Michie and Williams, 2003) highlighted that employees may experience stress when they are confused about their roles or responsibilities. According to interviewee 3, employees' comprehension of their duties might serve as a source of motivation, leading to increased efficiency in task execution. Figure 2 demonstrates that burnout diminishes engagement levels, while adequate resources enhance engagement. The findings are consistent with the literature review. The more the employees are satisfied the become engaged and productive in their roles contributing to greater performance (Wright *et al.*, 2002).

4.1.4.2 THE FACTORS THAT DECREASE WORKER'S PARTICIPATION

Participants revealed that there is a lack of support from the management, particularly during periods of difficulty and high workload. Malik and Noreen (2015) assert that organisations that offer support to employees can boost their confidence and reduce occupational stress.

“The way management reacts to incidents. I got attacked one time and management was just relaxed about it. After that incident, I noticed that my engagement level dropped because I figured I was on my own.” (Interviewee 3). The findings indicate that participants' satisfaction and engagement decline when they perceive a lack of support from management. The secondary data signifies that Newman *et al.* (2015), workers have a greater probability of being satisfied with their jobs if they view their workplace as being a supportive environment. Management should acknowledge that disengaged employees become more capable of leaving the organisation and displaying deviant behaviour when they perceive a lack of organisational support.

4.1.4.3 THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON ENGAGEMENT

In addition to managing the demands and resources of the job, leaders must establish a conducive environment that fosters employee engagement and productivity. Organisational culture is a major determinant of stress, which impacts employee engagement and performance (Amoako *et al.*, 2017). Most participants reported having a supportive work environment and positive working connections with their coworkers. In addition to managing the demands and resources of the job, leaders must establish a conducive environment that fosters employee engagement and productivity.

“The work culture is pretty much good it's one of the things that have kept me this long because my coworkers are very supportive. It's a small family that keeps me engaged.” (Interviewee 2) The interviewee's findings are consistent with Pandey's (2020) assertions, which indicate that the success of a business is mostly influenced by the skills, communication abilities, and social connections of its employees, who are significant stakeholders in the organisation. The findings suggest that despite the stress they may cause, supportive work environments can improve job satisfaction among part-time employees and, in certain instances, contribute to their retention. Moreover, organisational culture has a substantial impact on enhancing motivation, hence resulting in an elevation of engagement levels among part-time employees.

4.1.5 Objective 5: Ascertain the benefits of strategies to reduce occupational stress for part-time workers.

Most respondents indicated that there are no workshops or training programs specifically designed to address occupational stress reduction. Instead, the main approach is to train employees to work independently, as companies believe that increased awareness of work responsibilities can help alleviate stress.

4.1.5.1 COMPARISON BETWEEN FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES AND PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

According to Fagan *et al.* (2014), when part-time work is considered less important than full-time employment, it results in disadvantages such as reduced hourly wages and limited social benefits or chances for career advancement throughout one's working life. Participants expressed the perception that full-time employees are more highly esteemed than part-time employees, as it is easier to replace part-time workers compared to full-time workers as they contribute more to the business.

“Managers know that full-time workers work longer hours than part-time workers therefore they are more valuable compared to part-time workers.” (Interviewee 5). Bollé 2001 stated that employees who work on a part-time basis frequently face disadvantages relative to their full-time colleagues undertaking identical tasks as they often have lower hourly salaries, limited career opportunities, and ineligibility for certain social schemes. In the same way, the data shows that employees feel less appreciated than their full-time coworkers for several reasons. As a result, this makes them less motivated and engaged at work.

4.1.5.2 THE AVAILABILITY AND BENEFITS OF STRATEGIES OF REDUCING STRESS.

Many participants indicated that there are no specific programmes addressing stress. Nevertheless, the respondents have acquired all the essential training and courses that enable them to execute their duties effectively. Additionally, they emphasised that these training sessions have the advantage of enhancing productivity, reducing stress, and increasing pleasure. Health and Safety at Work (2022) asserts that although confronting occupational stress may pose difficulties, it also has the potential to facilitate constructive

transformations, such as enhanced workplace relationships that foster greater innovation and efficiency.

“Having access to support resources like training materials allows me to feel confident in the ability to handle challenges which reduces stress and boosts satisfaction.” (Interviewee 3).

The findings were consistent with the Heath at Safety at Work (2022) whose findings suggested that job-specific training is an effective management approach that plays a dual purpose when it comes to mitigating stress and aiding the recovery of staff who are experiencing stress. Training enhances employees' ability to execute their duties with increased self-assurance which relieves stress. However, according to Health at Safety at Work (2022), while training is a valuable method for alleviating stress, companies should also implement two additional stress interventions: prevention and minimization techniques, to effectively manage stress. While training is indeed a valuable tool, businesses should also implement additional preventive measures after conducting a risk management strategy, especially considering the dynamic nature of the work environment and the increasing influence of technology.

4.1.5.3 AVAILABILITY OF GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES.

Most respondents indicated that part-time workers have little or no prospects for advancement due to the preference for full-time workers in higher positions as they are more available.

“I do think you can be promoted as a part-time worker. It is less likely that you can be a supervisor because they don't want a part-time supervisor so they would rather consider a full-time worker for that role which is fair.” (Interviewee 4). The findings revealed a dearth of growth prospects due to the increased duties and complete availability required for supervisory roles. Consequently, (SMEs) tend to prioritise full-time personnel when it comes to providing possibilities. These findings are consistent with the assertions made by O'Sullivan et al. (2021), who argue that part-time employees have a decreased likelihood of receiving promotions and earning lower earnings. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents admitted that there are no prospects for advancement. However, they appeared to comprehend that it is logical for these opportunities to be given to full-time employees, since they are more accessible and capable of assuming greater duties. Moreover, the results

indicate that the absence of growth prospects does not cause stress for the participants, but rather presents a risk of diminishing motivation for the part-time employees.

Nevertheless, two individuals expressed similar views and stated that while growth prospects may be less common in many SMEs, there is potential for growth for part-time workers based on the nature of their employment, their degree of expertise, and the company they are employed by.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

An exhaustive review of the relevant literature and its constraints was conducted by the author to comprehend the tactics implemented specifically for part-time workers to mitigate stress and enhance their job satisfaction. Hence, the primary objective of this study was to examine the various strategies for part-time workers that mitigate occupational stress while simultaneously improving job satisfaction in Dublin SMEs. The author employed a qualitative and inductive methodology to examine these objectives by analysing primary data obtained through in-depth interviews, as described in Chapter 3.

This facilitated a more profound comprehension of three primary domains, namely: 1) The importance of managing job demands and job resources, 2) the influence of organizational culture on job satisfaction, and 3) The effective implementation strategies used to reduce stress for part-time workers.

5.1 The significance of managing job demands and job resources

According to this study, job demands were identified as the primary factor causing stress, which in turn could result in psychosocial stressors and subsequent health problems. In contrast, job resources were shown to be the main source of motivation. Therefore, organisations must prioritise the efficient management of job demands to minimise stress and provide all the essential resources to ensure employee job satisfaction. Demerouti *et al.* (2001), state that stress can occur regardless of the job when there is a combination of high job demands and restricted job resources. This is because these working conditions result in a loss of energy and a decrease in enthusiasm among workers.

Critically, it can be acknowledged that each occupation has a certain level of job pressure, but if these demands are not well managed and become overwhelming for employees, they can result in stress when left unaddressed could have significant repercussions.

5.1.1 Organisational culture influencing employee satisfaction.

According to Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013), a significant contributor to the stress that people experience in their jobs is the leadership of the organization. The organisational culture can either impede employees from reaching the company's goals or inspire them to be more productive and efficient in their positions.

The culture of an organisation influences the choices made, activities, and relationships of its workforce, hence creating a work setting where people do their tasks and achieve their desired outcomes to varying extents (Janićijević, Nikčević, and Vasić, 2018). Belias and Koustelios (2014) state that the leadership of a business must have substantial influencing abilities to ensure that the workforce embraces the culture. These values have a significant impact on influencing employees' behaviour, assisting them to deal with certain circumstances various circumstances and effectively addressing difficulties (Belias and Koustelios, 2014). The function of management in building an organisational culture that fosters a conducive atmosphere for employee satisfaction is significant. An effective organisational culture facilitates the active involvement and commitment of employees in addressing the evolving environmental requirements (Belias and Koustelios, 2014). This cultivates a feeling of accountability and heightened commitment to the company among the employees.

5.1.2 Efficient strategies to alleviate stress for part-time workers.

Typically, part-time occupations, have drawbacks when it comes to employment stability, average hourly compensation, and prospects for training and development (Fagan *et al.*, 2014). Hence, part-time workers are vulnerable to stress. However, each firm has unique challenges that impact its personnel, ultimately affecting their productivity and potentially causing adverse consequences on their well-being. According to Patro and Kumar (2019), effectively handling stress involves recognising that individuals are subjected to stressors.

The company must prioritise the development of a stress management strategy in the workplace to ensure overall well-being (Timotius and Octavius, 2022). However, establishing a dynamic and adaptive team that can work effectively among several activities may be

challenging in certain jobs that require part-time scheduling (Fagan *et al.*, 2014). Since companies strive to improve the versatility and adaptability of their staff, as well as promote flexible work across various activities, accommodating part-time schedules can present challenges in some job roles. According to Fagan *et al.* (2014), an effective work structure centered upon these work categories is capable of achievement if its staff possesses the required skills that are obtained from suitable training programs. A generally effective strategy for reducing stress is to provide comprehensive training to workers, enabling them to do their job activities confidently and efficiently (O'Dorchai *et al.*, 2007). Darmody and Smyth, (2016) state that role ambiguity is a significant determinant of job satisfaction. Consequently, when part-time employees have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities, their level of satisfaction can increase, leading to a potential reduction in stress.

5.2 Recommendations for academic studies

This study exclusively utilised qualitative approaches due to constraints in both resources and time. Future scholars can gain advantages from employing mixed methodologies, a concept that was not explored in this study but is crucial for reinforcing credibility by gathering data from several perspectives to achieve a comprehensive analysis.

Future researchers should explore the measurement of the efficacy of implemented strategies in mitigating part-time workers' stress. Although this dissertation did not cover these aspects, they are crucial due to the prevalence of stress in the ever-changing work environment. If strategies are implemented, it is imperative to evaluate their effectiveness, as their implementation incurs financial and labor costs for the company. Ineffective strategies should be revised accordingly.

5.2.1 Recommendations for Professionals

Occupational stress and job satisfaction are subjective topics that rely on numerous aspects. For SMEs, the process of redesigning and adapting to a constantly shifting work environment can be difficult due to the limited accessible financial resources, which tend to be less than those of bigger companies (Schreibauer *et al.*, 2020). Additional research regarding the beneficial effects of improvements at work in (SMEs) could help expedite essential modifications.

Consequently, while implementing stress management measures, the organisation must ensure that the strategies are both successful and specifically tailored to their staff.

According to Health and Safety at Work (2022), organisations commonly employ three primary types of stress management interventions: 1) **Primary Intervention** also known as prevention examines the problem of stress from its origin, to avoid its occurrence. 2) **Secondary Interventions** also known as management encompass various elements of employment, including job-specific training, training regarding health and safety, and assistance in managing both the interpersonal and technical components of workers' jobs. 3) **Tertiary interventions** also known as minimisation include programmes that assist employees either contracted or found within the organisation who provide professional assistance that can't be necessarily offered by the human resource department.

Based on this study, it is evident that the SMEs employed the secondary interventions approach to reduce stress and improve job satisfaction is to providing comprehensive training to part-time employees, enabling them to fully understand their responsibilities. However, Health and Safety at Work (2022) contends that it is often preferable to employ a mix of all interventions instead of just focusing on one and neglecting the other interventions. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should not only provide training to their staff but also use a range of tactics to effectively manage and prevent potential issues. Additional research regarding the beneficial effects of improvements at work in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could help expedite essential modifications. According to Health and Safety at Work (2022), risk management refers to a systematic and methodical problem-solving technique that requires engagement and collaboration and can be used for identifying and addressing the underlying issues that contribute to stress. Organisations must identify their challenges and stressors to effectively execute appropriate and targeted strategies for their employees.

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Appendix 1 Interview Questions

QUESTION 1

Objective 1: To examine the negative outcomes and effects of occupational stress on employee well-being.

- 1.1 What are the effects of work stress on your mental health?
- 1.2 How does work stress affect you physically and emotionally?
- 1.3 What other areas of your life are affected by work stress?
- 1.4 How do you handle work stress?

QUESTION 2

Objective 2: To investigate the impact of job demands in contributing to occupational stress.

- 2.1 What job demands generate stress?
- 2.2 How does job demand influence job satisfaction?
- 2.3 How have these job demands affected employee well-being?

QUESTION 3

Objective 3: To explore how job resources affect job satisfaction.

- 3.1 Are they sufficient job resources for daily tasks?
- 3.2 How do the job resources affect job satisfaction?
- 3.3 How do job resources affect performance?

QUESTION 4

Objective 4: To explore the impact of occupational stress on the engagement of part-time employees.

- 4.1 What are the stressors that reduce the level of engagement?
- 4.3 How does the organizational culture influence engagement?

QUESTION 5

Objective 5: Ascertain the benefits of strategies to reduce occupational stress and motivate part-time workers.

5.1 How do you stay motivated?

5.2 Do you think part-time workers are valued as much as full-time workers?

5.3 What strategies are employed to reduce work stress?

5.4 Do you think that they are growth opportunities?